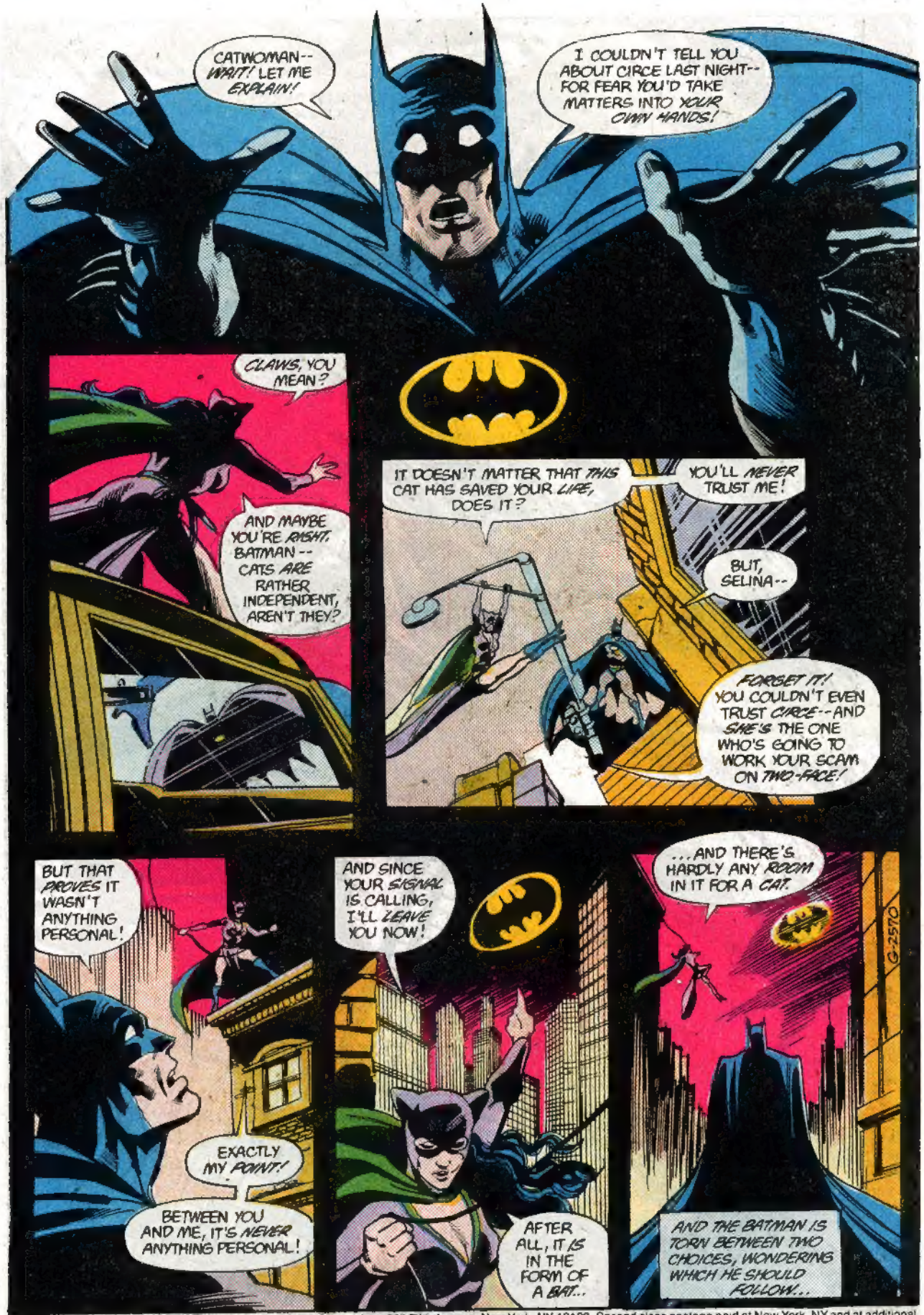
by DOUG MOENCH and TOM MANDRAKE
BAT MAN
75¢
398
AUG. 86
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
HELP ME, CATWOMAN-- BEFORE TWO-FACE BURIES ME ALIVE!!
SORRY, SPORT...
...THIS TIME YOU'RE ON YOUR OWN!!


CATWOMAN--
WAIT! LET ME EXPLAIN!
I COULDN'T TELL YOU ABOUT CIRCE LAST NIGHT--FOR FEAR YOU'D TAKE MATTERS INTO YOUR OWN HANDS!
CLAWS, YOU MEAN?
AND MAYBE YOU'RE RIGHT, BATMAN -- CATS ARE RATHER INDEPENDENT, AREN'T THEY?
IT DOESN'T MATTER THAT THIS CAT HAS SAVED YOUR LIFE, DOES IT?
YOU'LL NEVER TRUST ME!
BUT, SELINA--
FORGET IT! YOU COULDN'T EVEN TRUST CIRCE--AND SHE'S THE ONE WHO'S GOING TO WORK YOUR SCAM ON TWO-FACE!
BUT THAT PROVES IT WASN'T ANYTHING PERSONAL!
EXACTLY MY POINT!
BETWEEN YOU AND ME, IT'S NEVER ANYTHING PERSONAL!
AND SINCE YOUR SIGNAL IS CALLING, I'LL LEAVE YOU NOW!
AFTER ALL, IT IS IN THE FORM OF A BAT...
...AND THERE'S HARDLY ANY ROOM IN IT FOR A CAT.
AND THE BATMAN IS TORN BETWEEN TWO CHOICES, WONDERING WHICH HE SHOULD FOLLOW...
G-2570

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Brent-NW

...DUTY...
...OR LOVE?
I REALLY THOUGHT IT COULD *WORK*... BUT MAYBE IT WAS ALL JUST AN *UNREALISTIC DREAM*.
MAYBE THE BATMAN WILL *NEVER* BE ABLE TO TAKE ME INTO HIS FULL CONFIDENCE, NEVER *QUITE* TREAT ME AS A *FULL EQUAL*....
... AND NEVER EMBRACE ME WITH HIS *MIND* AS WELL AS HIS *HEART*.
BATMAN
CREATED BY BOB KANE
"ABOUT FACES!"

DOUG MOENCH . TOM MANDRAKE . JOHN COSTANZA . ADRIENNE ROY . LEN WEIN

WRITER ARTIST letterer colorist EDITOR

MAYBE HE'S SIMPLY INCAPABLE OF IT...
...TOO MUCH OF A LONER.
AND IF WE CAN'T EVEN CUT IT AS PARTNERS...
...THEN WHAT CHANCE DO WE HAVE AS...AS LOVERS?
SELINA...
WHAT--?
YOU FOLLOWED ME... INSTEAD OF YOUR SIGNAL?
I TRIED TO TELL YOU--MY WORK IS MY WORK AND WHAT I FEEL FOR YOU IS SOMETHING SEPARATE...
...BUT WHEN NECESSARY, IT TAKES PRECEDENCE.
ARE YOU TRYING TO SAY YOU LOVE ME, FRIEND?
WELL... YES.
BUT NOT ENOUGH TO SHARE YOUR WORK WITH ME...?
WE SHARE IT ALL THE TIME, SELINA.
ONLY SUPERFICIALLY... MEANING WE PUNCH FACES AND KICK BUTTS TOGETHER--BUT YOU NEVER REALLY SHARE WHATEVER DRIVES YOU, WHATEVER YOUR TRUE EMOTIONS AND PLANS ARE...
IN THIS CASE... MAYBE BECAUSE I'M ASHAMED OF THEM.
NO, NOT ASHAMED, BUT... EMBARRASSED.
WHY?
BECAUSE IT'S SUCH A... SAPPY LOVESHOT.

THIS TIME... I'M NOT OUT TO SIMPLY WHIP TWO-FACE AND SEND HIM BACK TO ARKHAM.
I WANT TO TRY TO... TO MAKE HIM... WELL, WHOLE AGAIN.
YOU MEAN... CONVINCE HIM TO BE... A NICE GUY AGAIN?
BEFORE HE LOST HALF HIS FACE TO MADNESS AND EVIL, SELINA, HE WAS DISTRICT ATTORNEY HARVEY DENT.
AND... WELL, I TOLD YOU IT WAS A WEAK LONGSHOT.
YET WORTH THE ATTEMPT--AND I THINK IT'S A SWEET ONE, ESPECIALLY COMING FROM THE GREAT GRIM, AVENGING BAT.
DON'T GET ME WRONG, NOW-- IF THE LONGSHOT WITH CIRCE FAILS, I'M FULLY PREPARED TO WHIP HIM.
NATURALLY--BUT THE REAL PROBLEM IS THAT YOU WERE AFRAID TO SHARE YOUR OTHER SIDE WITH ME-- UNTIL YOU WERE FORCED TO.
I'LL BET GREEN ARROW, AS POMPOUS AND MACHO AS HE IS, SHARES HIS SOFTER SIDE WITH BLACK CANARY...
WHAT DO THEY HAVE TO DO WITH US?
YOU REALLY WANT ME TO BE A HOTHEADED LOUDMOUTH LIKE GREEN ARROW?
MAYBE I DO-- IF IT MEANS AN OCCASIONAL HEART-TO-HEART BETWEEN ALL THE COLD GRIMNESS.
YEAH? WELL, YOU'RE NOT EXACTLY LITTLE MISS SWEETNESS AND LIGHT YOURSELF, YOU KNOW!
MAYBE NOT, BUT AT LEAST I KNOW WHEN TO TURN SOFT AND ACT HUMAN ONCE IN A WHILE!
SOFT?! SOMETIMES YOU'RE THE HARDEST WOMAN I'VE EVER--
AND THEN THEY CATCH THEMSELVES, ABRUPTLY AWARE OF THE ARGUMENT'S ABSURDITY...
LISTEN TO US--WE SOUND LIKE A COUPLE WHO'VE BEEN MARRIED TEN YEARS.
WE DO, DON'T WE?

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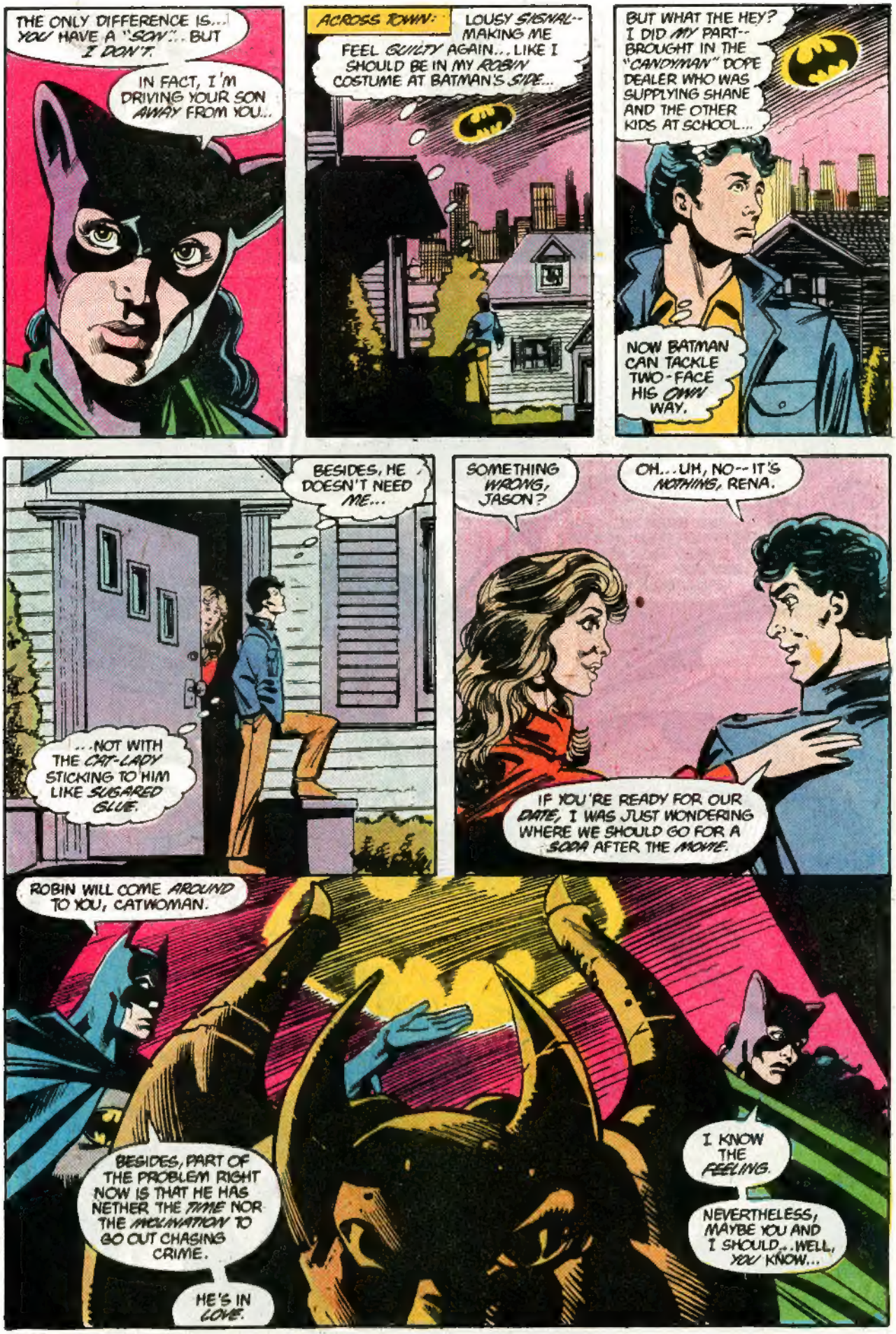
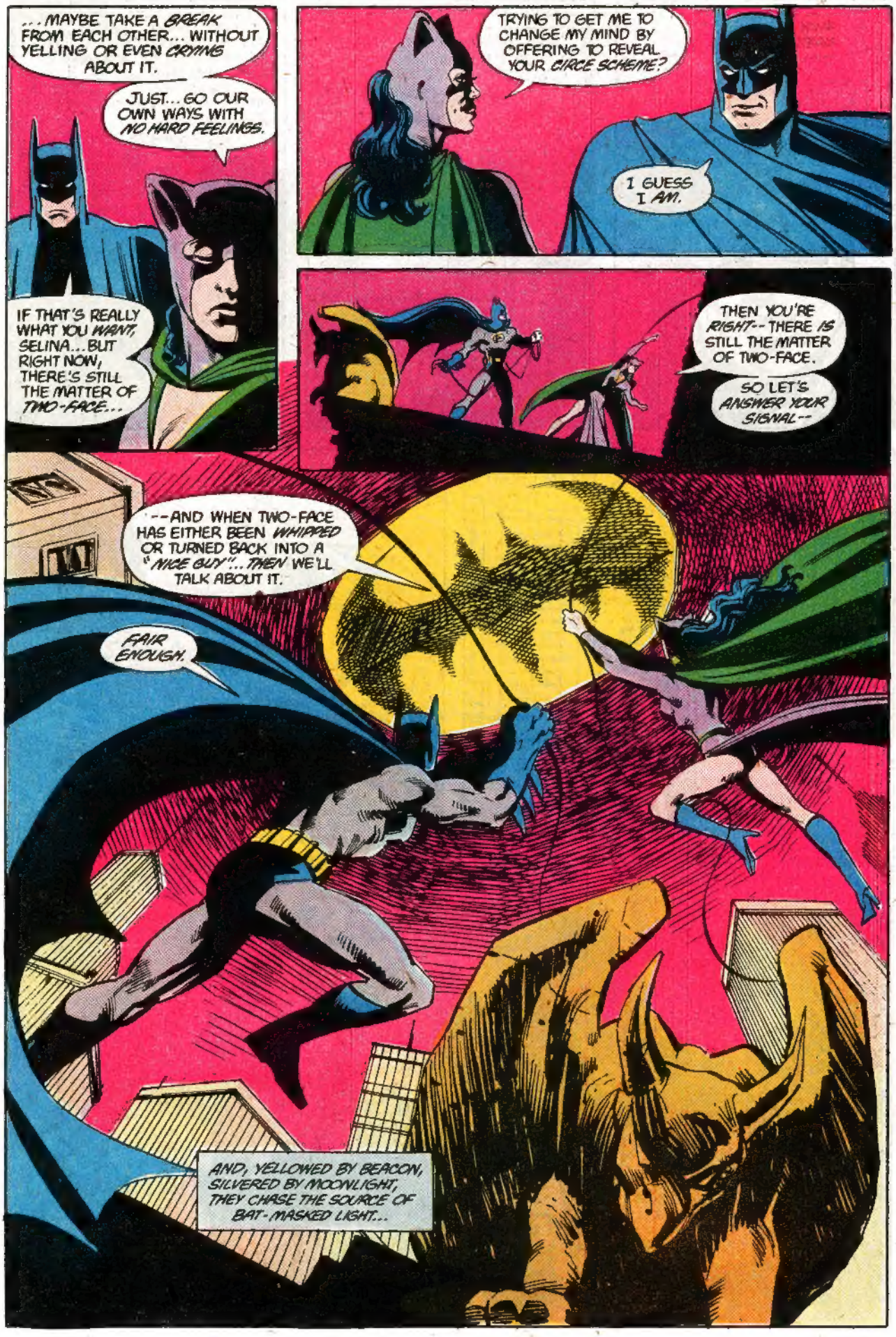

THE ONLY DIFFERENCE IS... YOU HAVE A "SON"... BUT I DON'T.
IN FACT, I'M DRIVING YOUR SON AWAY FROM YOU...
ACROSS TOWN:
LOUSY SIGNAL-- MAKING ME FEEL GUILTY AGAIN... LIKE I SHOULD BE IN MY ROBIN COSTUME AT BATMAN'S SIDE...
BUT WHAT THE HEY? I DID MY PART-- BROUGHT IN THE "CANDYMAN" DOPE DEALER WHO WAS SUPPLYING SHANE AND THE OTHER KIDS AT SCHOOL...
NOW BATMAN CAN TACKLE TWO-FACE HIS OWN WAY.
BESIDES, HE DOESN'T NEED ME...
...NOT WITH THE CAT-LADY STICKING TO HIM LIKE SUGARED GLUE.
SOMETHING WRONG, JASON?
OH...UH, NO-- IT'S NOTHING, RENA.
IF YOU'RE READY FOR OUR DATE, I WAS JUST WONDERING WHERE WE SHOULD GO FOR A SODA AFTER THE MOVIE.
ROBIN WILL COME AROUND TO YOU, CATWOMAN.
BESIDES, PART OF THE PROBLEM RIGHT NOW IS THAT HE HAS NEITHER THE TIME NOR THE MOTIVATION TO GO OUT CHASING CRIME.
HE'S IN LOVE.
I KNOW THE FEELING.
NEVERTHELESS, MAYBE YOU AND I SHOULD...WELL, YOU KNOW...


...MAYBE TAKE A BREAK FROM EACH OTHER... WITHOUT YELLING OR EVEN CRYING ABOUT IT.
JUST... GO OUR OWN WAYS WITH NO HARD FEELINGS.
IF THAT'S REALLY WHAT YOU WANT, SELINA... BUT RIGHT NOW, THERE'S STILL THE MATTER OF TWO-FACE...
TRYING TO GET ME TO CHANGE MY MIND BY OFFERING TO REVEAL YOUR CIRCE SCHEME?
I GUESS I AM.
THEN YOU'RE RIGHT-- THERE IS STILL THE MATTER OF TWO-FACE.
SO LET'S ANSWER YOUR SIGNAL--
--AND WHEN TWO-FACE HAS EITHER BEEN WHIPPED OR TURNED BACK INTO A "NICE GUY"... THEN WE'LL TALK ABOUT IT.
FAIR ENOUGH.
AND, YELLOWED BY BEACON, SILVERED BY MOONLIGHT, THEY CHASE THE SOURCE OF BAT-MASKED LIGHT...

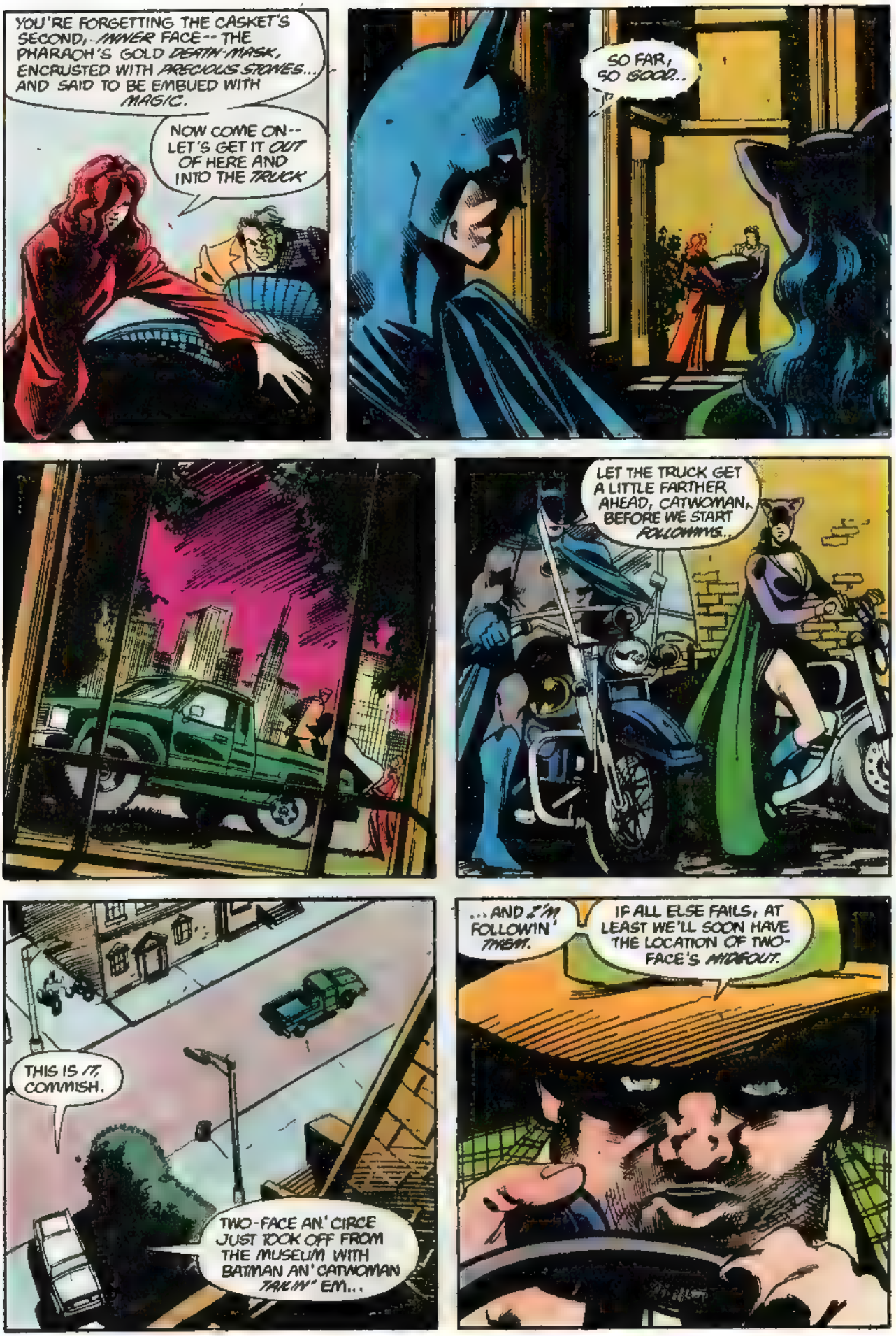
...TO THE ROOF OF POLICE HEADQUARTERS:
SO WHAT HAVE YOU GOT, GORDON?
WE'VE SECURED COOPERATION FROM THE MUSEUM, BATMAN...
FULL COOPERATION?
YES--THEY FEEL AS BULLOCK AND I DO, THAT THIS CIRCE GAMBIT OF YOURS HAS ONLY A REMOTE CHANCE OF SUCCESS, AND MAY INDEED BE HOPELESS...
...BUT THEY'VE NEVERTHELESS AGREED TO PLAY ALONG, ACCOMMODATING YOUR EVERY REQUEST.
THEN GORDON AND BULLOCK ALREADY KNOW MORE ABOUT THIS THAN I DO...
GOOD--LIMITING THE ONLY RISK TO CIRCE HERSELF.
SHE HINTED THAT HER INVOLVEMENT IN MY SCHEME MIGHT BE MOTIVATED BY SELF-INTEREST--DOUBLE-CROSSING ME TO USE TWO-FACE IN TAKING REVENGE ON BLACK MASK.
BUT IT'S A RISK I'M PREPARED TO TAKE--ONE I'VE GOT TO TAKE--OR I FORFEIT ALL CHANCE TO REDEEM CIRCE AS WELL AS TO "REHABILITATE" TWO-FACE.
AND ARE YOU EVER GOING TO TELL ME JUST WHAT THAT CHANCE IS, BATMAN?
OH...UH, YES, OF COURSE, CATWOMAN...
THE SETUP INVOLVES THE SARCOPHAGUS OF A CERTAIN PHARAOH "ANKH-ES-ANON"--"ON LOAN" FROM EGYPT'S DEPARTMENT OF ANTIQUITIES TO THE GOTHAM MUSEUM...
AND AS HE FINALLY SPILLS IT ALL, HE HAS NEVER BEFORE SEEMED SO SHEEPISH.

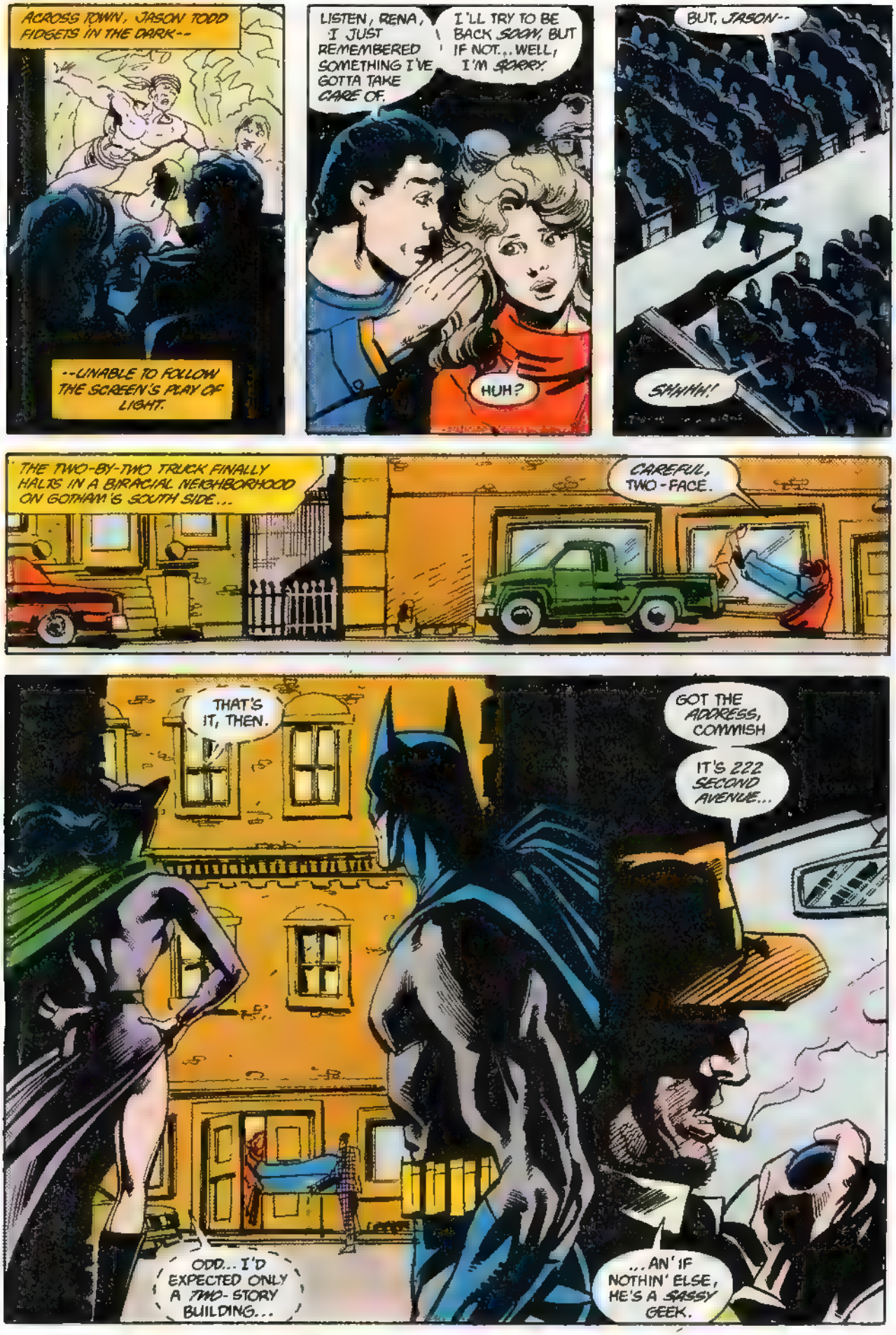
I MUST BE CRAZY TO TRUST A DAME CLAIMING TO BE A "RED WITCH"...
...BUT I FLIPPED MY DOUBLE-HEADED COIN, CIRCE, AND YOUR SIDE CAME UP..
THE SCARRED SIDE, NO DOUBT.
BUT EVEN IF YOU DON'T BELIEVE IN ANCIENT EGYPTIAN SORCERY...OR IN MY "MAGIC" EITHER--
--THE THEFT OF A PRICELESS TWO-FACED PHARAOH'S SARCOPHAGUS IS STILL A PERFECT CRIME FOR YOU...
...IS IT NOT?
WHY DO YOU THINK I EVEN BOTHERED TO FLIP THE COIN, CIRCE?
NOW LET'S GET ON WITH IT--WE'RE HERE.
REMEMBER, TWO-FACE--WE GO IN BY THE REAR ENTRANCE...
...WHERE I USE THIS MAGNETIC CARD-KEY ON THE LOCK-SENSOR--TO CIRCUMVENT THE ALARMS.
I STILL WANT TO KNOW HOW YOU GOT HOLD OF THAT THING.
MAGIC.
I'M A WITCH, REMEMBER?

CONTINUED ON 3RD PAGE FOLLOWING

"ALL RIGHT-- QUIET, TWO-FACE."
"HERE COMES THE NIGHT-GUARD..."
...AND SINCE I SENSE YOU STILL DON'T TRUST ME--
--WOULD IT HELP IF I TOOK CARE OF HIM WITH THIS MAGIC SCEPTER?
COULDN'T HURT.
"THEN STAND BACK, TWO-FACE...
"...AND WATCH."
WUMP
SATISFIED?
SO FAR, CIRCE-- BUT WHERE'S THIS ANKH-ES-ANON'S SARCOPHAGUS?
PATIENCE-- IT'S RIGHT DOWN THIS CORRIDOR...

AND WHEN CIRCE AND TWO-FACE HAVE PASSED FROM VIEW...
KRE-E-E-E-E-K
HEY!
YOU ALL RIGHT?
HIT ME HARDER... THAN SHE DID IN REHEARSAL...
...BUT YES, I'LL BE ALL RIGHT...
LET'S JUST HOPE IT WAS AN ACCIDENT, CATWOMAN... AND NOT AN ABOUT-FACE ON CIRCE'S PART.
BLACK MASK DID A REAL NUMBER ON HER FACE, CATWOMAN... AND MAYBE ON HER PSYCHE.
BUT IF SHE HAS GONE MAD WITH VENGEANCE, WE'LL SOON FIND OUT.
THIS IS IT, HUH? THE GREAT ANKH-ES-AMON...
IT SURE DOESN'T LOOK PRICELESS-- JUST OLD.


YOU'RE FORGETTING THE CASKET'S SECOND, INNER FACE -- THE PHARAOH'S GOLD DEATH-MASK, ENCRUSTED WITH PRECIOUS STONES... AND SAID TO BE EMBUED WITH MAGIC.
NOW COME ON -- LET'S GET IT OUT OF HERE AND INTO THE TRUCK
SO FAR, SO GOOD...
LET THE TRUCK GET A LITTLE FARTHER AHEAD, CATWOMAN, BEFORE WE START FOLLOWING.
THIS IS IT, COMMISH.
TWO-FACE AN' CIRCE JUST TOOK OFF FROM THE MUSEUM WITH BATMAN AN' CATWOMAN TAKIN' 'EM...
...AND I'M FOLLOWIN' THEM.
IF ALL ELSE FAILS, AT LEAST WE'LL SOON HAVE THE LOCATION OF TWO-FACE'S HIDEOUT.


ACROSS TOWN, JASON TODD FIDGETS IN THE DARK--
--UNABLE TO FOLLOW THE SCREEN'S PLAY OF LIGHT.
LISTEN, RENA, I JUST REMEMBERED SOMETHING I'VE GOTTA TAKE CARE OF.
I'LL TRY TO BE BACK SOON, BUT IF NOT...WELL, I'M SORRY.
HUH?
BUT, JASON--
SHHHH!
THE TWO-BY-TWO TRUCK FINALLY HALTS IN A BIRACIAL NEIGHBORHOOD ON GOTHAM'S SOUTH SIDE...
CAREFUL, TWO-FACE.
THAT'S IT, THEN.
GOT THE ADDRESS, COMMISH
IT'S 222 SECOND AVENUE...
ODD...I'D EXPECTED ONLY A TWO-STORY BUILDING...
...AN' IF NOTHIN' ELSE, HE'S A SASSY GEEK.

AND INSIDE THE TOP FLOOR SPLIT HIDEOUT...
IF THE INNER FACE DOES INDEED HOLD ALL THE NOBILITY AND PURITY OF THE PHARAOH'S HEART, TWO-FACE... THEN ALL THAT REMAINS IS FOR YOU TO BELIEVE IT...
SHUT UP, GRIMES, AND LET THE WITCH DO HER THING
TO HELL WITH NOBILITY AND PURITY--LET'S SEE ALL THE GOLD AND GEMS THE FACE IS S'POSED TO HAVE
ALL RIGHT, CIRCE--LET'S SEE THIS "MAGIC FACE."
SIGNIFICANTLY, SHE PLACES THE OUTER FACE DOWN ON THE CLASSY SIDE OF THE ROOM. THEN REACHES IN TO DRY THE INNER FACE FREE
WEAR IT, TWO-FACE--
--AND BE BLESSED WITH ALL THE PHARAOH'S GOODNESS
AND AT LEAST ONE SIDE OF TWO-FACE APPEARS SPELLBOUND
YES. . I WILL WEAR IT, CIRCE..
AW, COME ON, BOSS! YOU AIN'T GONNA FALL FOR--
GET OUT OF THIS ROOM--BOTH OF YOU!

I DON'T BELIEVE IT!
ME NEITHER-- BUT MAYBE THE BOSS KNOWS WHAT HE'S DOIN...
NOW STEP TO THE MIRROR, TWO-FACE...
...AND BEHOLD THE MAGIC OF A NEW FACE, THREE THOUSAND YEARS OLD...
GAZE AT THE MAGIC, AND BELIEVE WHAT YOUR EYES SEE...
FEEL THE MAGIC... FEEL THE MASK'S POWER OF GOODNESS... FLOWING INTO YOU... AND FEEL THE PURE SOUL OF A MAN LONG DEAD BUT NOW RETURNING TO LIFE IN YOU...
...JUST AS THE DORMANT SOUL OF HARVEY DENT IS RETURNING TO LIFE...
YOU'RE RIGHT-- A HUGE LONGSHOT.
YES, NOW THAT SHE'S TRYING TO DO IT... IT SEEMS MORE ABSURD THAN EVER.
NEVER WOULD'VE EVEN THOUGHT OF IT IF TWO-FACE HADN'T ESCAPED ARKHAM BY USING HIS TRICK COIN TO HYPNOTIZE THE GUARD AND THAT LAWYER...
I...I THINK I... FEEL FUNNY...
NEED SOME TIME... TO THINK... ALONE...
...AND BELIEVE THAT YOU ARE HARVEY DENT... GOTHAM'S DISTRICT ATTORNEY... A GOOD AND HANDSOME MAN...
BELIEVE, HARVEY DENT... BELIEVE... BELIEVE...
AND TWO-FACE LEAVES THE ROOM.
IT ACTUALLY WORKED?
MAYBE... BUT WHERE HARVEY DENT IS CONCERNED.. THE JURY'S STILL OUT.

IN THE BEDROOM:
MAYBE I SHOULD MAKE MY FACE WHOLE AGAIN... BUT WHICH SIDE SHOULD TAKE OVER THE OTHER..?
UGLY OR HANDSOME... GOOD OR EVIL?
NORMAL... OR...
...SCARRED?
THERE IS ONLY ONE WAY, AS EVER--
--TO DECIDE.
HMMMMM..
BEST TWO OUT OF THREE
--AGAIN--?
BEST THREE OUT OF FIVE, THEN.

AND WHAT ABOUT HER? IS SHE PLAYING IT STRAIGHT--OR HOPING TO USE TWO-FACE AS A PUPPET TO KILL BLACK MASK?
I DON'T KNOW... BUT I DON'T LIKE THIS WAITING.
WHAT'S TWO-FACE DOING?
MAYBE WE SHOULD JUST CRASH IN RIGHT NOW AND--
WAIT, BATMAN--LOOK!
I'VE CHOSEN, CIRCE.
I DON'T BELIEVE IT!
IT...IT REALLY DID WORK--?!
BUT THE CHOICE I MADE... WAS THE TOUGH ONE.
WH-WHAT...?
COME OFF IT, WITCH! DID YOU REALLY THINK I'D FALL FOR ALL THIS "MAGIC PHARAOH" GARBAGE? FOR THAT PHONY BOSS MASK WITH ITS COLORED GLASS BEADS?!
I ADMIT I ALMOST FELL FOR IT--MAYBE EVEN WANTED TO...
...BUT YOU MADE ONE BIG MISTAKE!
NAP
NO SUCH PHARAOH AS ANKH-ES-ANON EVER EXISTED!
HOW STUPID DID YOU AND BATMAN THINK I AM?!

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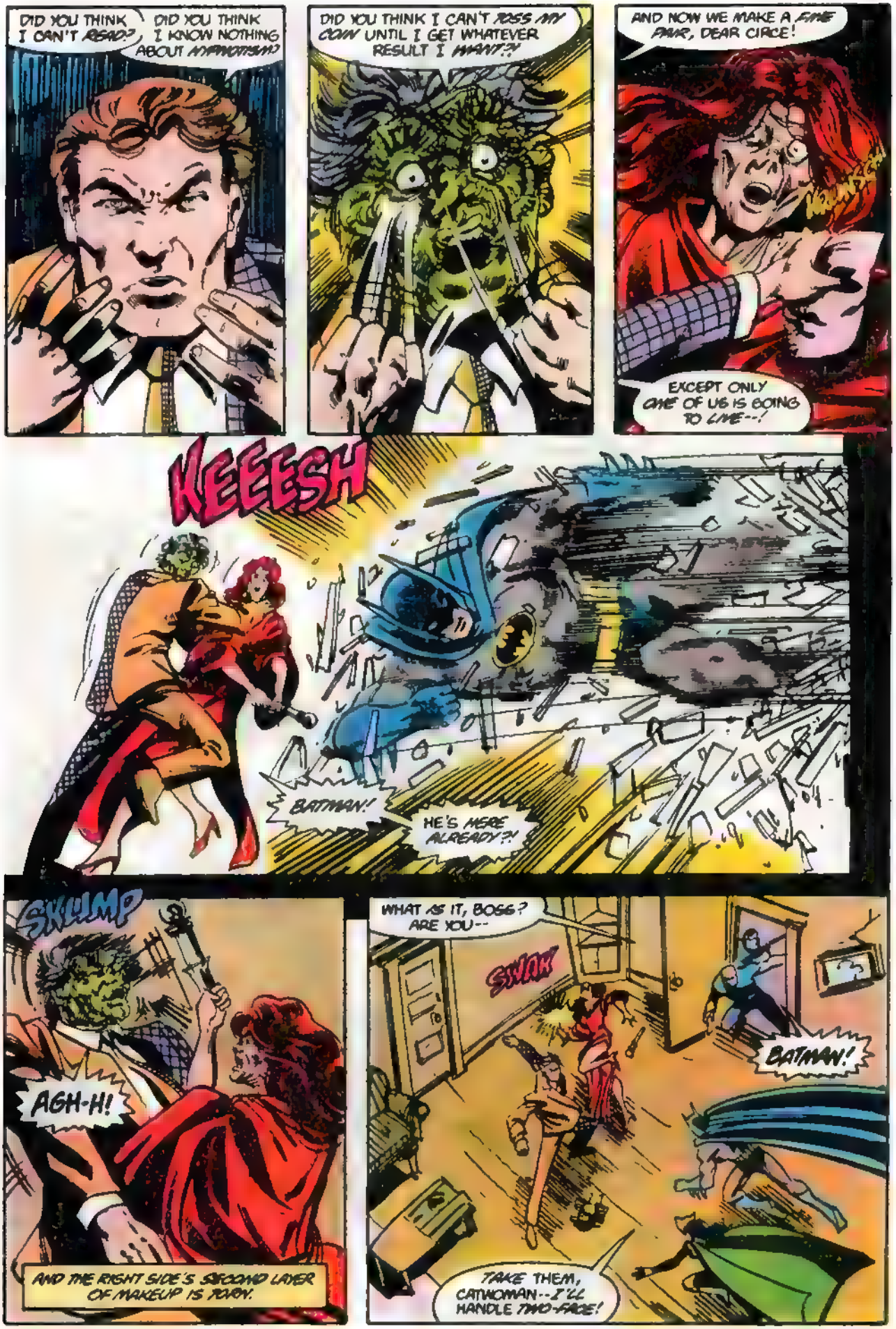
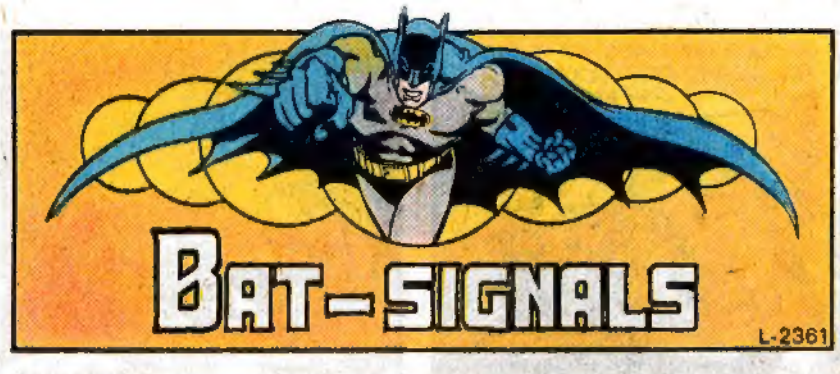

DID YOU THINK I CAN'T READ?
DID YOU THINK I KNOW NOTHING ABOUT HYPNOTISM?
DID YOU THINK I CAN'T TOSS MY COIN UNTIL I GET WHATEVER RESULT I WANT?!
AND NOW WE MAKE A FINE PAIR, DEAR CIRCE!
EXCEPT ONLY ONE OF US IS GOING TO LIVE--!
KEEESH
BATMAN!
HE'S MERE ALREADY?!
SKUMP
AGH-H!
AND THE RIGHT SIDE'S SECOND LAYER OF MAKEUP IS TOAST.
WHAT IS IT, BOSS? ARE YOU--
SWAK
BATMAN!
TAKE THEM, CATWOMAN--I'LL HANDLE TWO-FACE!

AND WHILE THE BATMAN GRAPPLES WITH HIS NOW ONE-FACED NEMESIS--
SH-TRAK!
--CATWOMAN'S FIGHT WITH THE TWO HENCHMEN--
BWAK!
UHN--!
--THE DOOR OPENS...
SKAK!
--SWIFTLY BECOMES A CLOSED ISSUE.
BUT THEN--

ENTER: ROBIN.
OOPS.
UH, SORRY, CAT-LADY.
GORDON GAVE ME THE ADDRESS... SAID YOU WERE HERE.. AND--
SHUT UP!!
LISTEN TO ME, DENT!
YOU'RE MAKING THE WRONG CHOICE!
YOU DON'T HAVE TO SUCCUMB TO EVIL JUST BECAUSE HALF YOUR FACE WAS RUINED!
YOU WERE ONCE A GOOD MAN!
THEN YOU TURNED HALF-GOOD AND HALF-EVIL...
...BUT NOW YOU'RE TURNING ALL EVIL!
DON'T YOU SEE?
THAT PROVES YOU CAN GO THE OTHER WAY TOO! YOU CAN RETURN TO BEING HARVEY DENT AGAIN!
WHAT KIND OF SUCKER DO YOU THINK I AM, BATMAN?
YOU CAN SEE THE CHOICE I MADE-- IT'S ALL OVER MY FACE, OR AT LEAST HALF OF IT...
AND YOU KNOW WHAT THE CHOICE ADDS UP TO?
ONE BARREL FOR YOU, BATMAN...
...AND THE OTHER BARREL FOR CATWOMAN AND ROBIN.

CONCLUDED ON 3rd PAGE FOLLOWING

STILL, HE REMOVES THE COLLOIDAL GEL, RESTORING WHAT HE CAN...
SHOULD HAVE KNOWN IT WOULD FAIL... AND DEEP DOWN, I DID KNOW.
IT'LL TAKE FAR MORE THAN HYPNOTISM... OR REMOVING MAKEUP... TO BRING BACK HARVEY DENT... ESPECIALLY NOW THAT HIS GOOD SIDE HAS BEEN MARKED BY CIRCE...
SPEAKING OF THE WITCH, BATMAN... SHE'S GONE.
YES... AND LET'S HOPE SHE WASN'T MARKED TOO DEEPLY BY TWO-FACE...
THEN WE'LL NEVER KNOW THE ANSWER ABOUT HER...
...IF SHE WAS REALLY WITH YOU OR NOT.
NOT FOR NOW, ANYWAY.
BUT WHAT ABOUT YOU, CATWOMAN? YOU SAID YOU'D GIVE YOUR ANSWER WHEN IT WAS OVER.
I CHANGED MY MIND. I...I REALLY DON'T KNOW YET. I STILL FEEL.... REMOTE FROM YOU. SEE ME TOMORROW NIGHT, BATMAN.
IF I'M WEARING A SMILE... YOU'LL KNOW.
BUT DON'T BET ON IT, BECAUSE IF YOU ASK ME...
...ROBIN'S RETURN THROUGH THIS DOOR RANKS VERY HIGH ON THE CRAZY SCALE.
IN THE NEXT ISSUE OF DETECTIVE COMICS: THE LOVE KILLING!



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Dear Len and Bob,

See? You can too have two parts of the same major plot run in one of your titles without having it cross over into the other title. Yes, I am referring to the Dark Rider/Plutonium story line which just concluded in BATMAN #394. I don't mind the subplots bouncing back and forth between BATMAN and DETECTIVE with wild abandon, but whenever possible, I prefer the major plot of the story to stay in one title. To be honest, I was surprised to see both chapters of the Dark Rider still in BATMAN even with (or maybe that should be despite) the terrific art by Paul Gulacy.

Whenever possible, keep the major story lines in the same book.

Jef Peckham
4303 Pearl, #4
Kansas City, KS 66103

*****

Dear Doug and Paul,

I have just finished reading BATMAN #394, electing to write to you in order to comment on both issues in the two-part series. A series, I must say, that I enjoyed immensely! The intrigue/spy story is one that nicely suits the Batman. I was particularly impressed with the characterization, especially that of Katia.

Her statement in #394, page 23, panel 3, is one that is wise and quite true. It would be so easy to be swept along in the paranoia to create a merciless bitch who is supposed to represent the American perception of the Soviet government. But instead, you did something different and innovative. You gave us a woman who, although a representative of the Soviet government, thinks and acts as a normal human being (as opposed to a Reagan-inspired demon). She is not evil. She is, in her own way, just as much a force for good as the Batman. She is also a woman, who, like all of us, enjoys the "gaudy materialism" found in America. I applaud you, Doug, in creating a very human character and for breaking the stereotypes pushed on by the ever-present Reaganite propaganda, which, as Katia said, does neither our country nor theirs any good.

As for the art, I believe it to be the best to grace the pages of BATMAN. The creative use of shadows, the excellent shading process, the detailed faces and anatomical detail, and the intricate background detail are all signs of a great artist. Truly, a bit of proof that comics are indeed an art form. Paul's storytelling technique is well-conceived and effective. The use of shading is reminiscent of Wally Wood. And, to me, no greater compliment can be given. Besides that, Katia is quite a lovely woman to behold. Needless to say, I'm impressed. Perhaps Katia could, ah, persuade Paul to become the permanent artist on BATMAN?

Anyway, thanks to both Doug and Paul for two great issues.

Jeff Melton
4732 Long Leaf Hills Drive
Wilmington, NC 28403

*****

Dear Len,

I held off on writing this letter until I had read the conclusion of "The Dark Rider." When I first heard that Paul Gulacy would be doing the art on a Batman story, I was very interested. I like the team of Moench/Gulacy very much. I couldn't wait to open BATMAN #393. I can't say I felt the same about BATMAN #394.

If it had been any book but BATMAN, I would have said the art was great. The art just wasn't "right." Inappropriate, maybe. Maybe the problem was the story; Batman's a detective, not a spy. Would you expect James Bond to run around in a funny suit and throw Batarangs? Neither would I, but that's what I felt I was supposed to think as I read this story. Normally, I try to be specific as to how I feel about a given issue of BATMAN, but I find that difficult in this case.

I will be very specific about one thing: I hate violence! Dream or no dream, there was no need for the decapitation scene and the fight scenes conveyed more violence than action. Comics that are too violent, I stop buying.

This letter was very painful to write, but I had to write it.

Joe Sarnicola
38 Barber Street
Auburn, NY 13021

In the arena of international espionage there is quite a bit of violence exhibited. While you may have felt the fight scenes were more violence than action, that's the way it happens sometimes. You go into a situation and you expect one thing, but very often you get something else entirely. As for the decapitation, it clearly stated just how deeply affected the Batman was by the events leading up to the second half of the story. It also set the tenor of the issue and that served as a kind of warning.

Dear Bat-Len and Bat-Bob,

After reading BATMAN #394, I finally figured out why I think Doug Moench is the absolute *best* writer currently working in the medium: it's because Doug takes bigger than life characters and manages to instill them with the same ordinary, *human* doubts and worries that we're all party to.

Thank you, Doug, for portraying all your heroes so nobly and yet realistically.

Elvis Orten
Route #4, Box 120
Dawson Springs, KY 42408

*****

Dear Len and Co.,

I picked up BATMAN #389 because of the cover. I'm collecting the series because of the art and writing in #393-394. That is how the Batman should be done. Don't stop now.

Keep the Catwoman.

Greg Western
16925 West Sibelius
Gurnee, IL 60031

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Dear Len and Bob,

After finishing the latest installment of the Darknight Detective, I can safely say you've done it again. Doug really came through with the conclusion of the "Dark Rider" story line. I also felt the last lines of Katia were intriguing, and of course I agree with her. It *is* time to set aside reserved judgments and paranoia and self-reighteousness and develop the attitude that we're all human, regardless of race, color, or even nationality.

Doug, as of late, has redefined what Batman is. The reason why Batman has survived when other characters didn't was the interesting way writers have treated his many-faceted personality. You have:

1) The detective
2) The human being
3) The mysterious crimefighter/vigilante
4) The lone wolf

A really interesting character has three (or four as I just stated) dimensions, a believable history and humanistic needs/qualities. Anyway, it's for these reasons that I beg to differ with Steve Englehart about Batman's sanity. The Batman makes mistakes because he's human. And he does make mistakes. Len himself brought up the fact of how many enemies, how many lives

he's altered and those are people that would have otherwise lived happy and fulfilling lives and that can't be chalked up to Batman's childhood.

You see, regardless of your personal situation, your mistakes can't be blamed upon your own misfortune.

Of course, there are exceptions. Assuming your father beat you when you were younger, I'd bet that you'd beat your children. But sooner or later you must take responsibility for your actions, but that point of judgment should come naturally, without being pushed. But, nevertheless, it should come.

As for the art, well, what can I say? Paul Gulacy, if not elsewhere, has here proven himself a class-artist. The mood he set for the story never missed, and it was sustained throughout the story. Not an easy task, mind you.

Mr. Costanza also proved his worth as the top letterer in the business. Adrienne, you proved yourself to be a beautiful colorist, also. Few colorists ever show the depth and intelligence she does.

And tell Len to get off his butt and get behind the typewriter for a change. Get cracking on some new ideas!

David Lloyd Glenister
PO Box 1626
Rohnert Park, CA 94928

Len is busy. Very busy. He did the Blue Beetle tale in SECRET ORIGINS #2 and this month we have BLUE BEETLE #3 coming out. He will co-write a new mini-series called LEGENDS and will become the regular writer of STAR TREK with #31, as well as a few other new series he is developing. In addition, Len has been approached to do some writing outside of comics and he is trying to fit all of that in as well as watch most every prime time television show now on.

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Dear Bat-Guys,

BATMAN #394—I loved it! My compliments, Mr. Gulacy. Your art is so life-like it's spooky. I love the shadows. Batman belongs in them.

And Mr. Moench, what can I say? The story in issue #393-394 was superb. When Katia double-crossed BATMAN in part one I couldn't stand the pretty little Russian. But by the end of the tale I thought very highly of her.

And to everybody else at Bat-Works, good job and keep up the good work.

Lammers
RR 1
Blackwater, MO 65322

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Dear Everyone,

Thank you, Doug Moench, for your best work in (BATMAN #393-394) that I have ever read since the Man-Bat two-parter. They both had good adversaries, plot twists, the re-emergence of Batman as a shadowy figure (especially after the rather humorous tale in the previous issue), a bit of detective work, and use of the utility belt. This is the kind of work I know Doug is capable of and would love to see more of. I do, however, have one major and one minor problem.

The beautiful Russian female spy is such a cliché. Sure, she didn't fall for Batman and American capitalism, but the soapy bathroom sequence was a bit much (not for her, for me). Also, trying to explain the plot through her dialogue with Batman was a bit confusing, though I enjoyed the barbs they passed back and forth.

My minor problem was in the first half. When it became apparent that Batman could not escape all the men encircling him, he threw a smoke bomb. It would have made more sense for him to release gas pellets to render them unconscious. After all, he does carry a breathing apparatus with him.

Paul Gulacy's art added just the right touch of shadowy realism to the story.

Vincent R. Bellizia Jr.
528 Second Avenue
North Brunswick, NJ 08902

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Dear Len and Bob,

Recently, while researching a Joker history for *Amazing Heroes*, something occurred to me: there has never been a really successful attempt at teaming Batman's greatest adversaries in a single plot to defeat our hero. Oh, there've been some valiant efforts over the years (most recently in DETECTIVE #526), and the Joker, Penguin, and Hugo Strange all crossed paths during Steve Englehart's scripting tenure a few years back. To my mind, however, there has not been a true Bat-villain alliance, since the Joker and Penguin teamed up way back in 1944, that has really been memorable enough to take its place among other Batman tales now considered classics.

This, then, is my challenge for Doug Moench: to concoct a serial teaming the Joker, Penguin, Two-Face, Riddler, Black Mask, or whatever group of no-goodniks he prefers, in a deadly game of wits with the Batman. I'm already looking forward to a story that will one day become widely regarded as a Bat-classic. A heady challenge, but I think Doug can do it.

Going to the opposite extreme, I'd love to see some good ol' fashioned puzzlers and whodunits, *sans* super-villains. But enough from me; Doug should be at his typewriter by now...

Carl Cafarelli
576 Lisbon Avenue
Buffalo, NY 14215

There have been numerous villain gatherings over the years including issue #201's collection of villains trying to save Batman's life and the crafty four-parter from the late 1970s where various villains claimed to have taken Batman's life. While it's true neither of those have been considered Bat-classics, we're convinced Doug has already risen to the challenge and surpassed your expectations with BATMAN #400.

It's a story told in chapters with art by some of the best names in the business today—George Pérez, Joe Kubert, Paris Cullins, Brian Bolland, Steve Leialoha, Rick Leonardi, Arthur Adams, Bill Sienkiewicz—and it has villains galore.

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COMING ATTRACTIONS

In two weeks, we get closer to the conclusion of the Two-Face shocker in DETECTIVE by Doug, Gene Colan, and Bob Smith and then back here in a month for the wrap-up from Doug and Tom Mandrake. Everything will be coming to a conclusion at that point, setting the stage for BATMAN #400, which will be one of the most talked-about comics of the summer.

Later this month we will have BATMAN ANNUAL #10. It's a 38-page story by Doug, Denys Cowan, and Dick Giordano featuring the return of one of the most asked-for Bat-villains of all. It's also a solo Batman story for those who have been clamoring for one of those.

And, of course, there's HUNT THE DARK KNIGHT, part three in Frank Miller's vision of a future Batman. It's got Two-Face, the female Robin, and even an appearance by Clark Kent. Don't miss this one. Meantime, for those who haven't noticed, Batman is also appearing every month in JUSTICE LEAGUE OF AMERICA and is a regular player in the DC CHALLENGE.

Len also reminds everyone to look for BLUE BEETLE #3, now on sale, as he and Paris Cullins continue the all-new exploits of the Beetle and his new cast of friends.

Next month will have action, surprises, and some announcements about the future, so don't miss out! Keep smiling and we'll see you.

—Bob Greenberger